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Wireless Smart Utility Meters. Health and Environmental Impacts

New EDF/CUB Smart Meter Data Report Shows Potential for Abuses of Power and Collusion

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On November 14, 2017 the Environmental Defense Fund and the Citizen's Utility Board of Illinois released the results of a study "New Smart Meter Data Shows Potential of Real-Time Pricing to Lower Electric Bills."

The report concluded that "Ninety-seven percent of a sample of Commonwealth Edison (ComEd) customers would have saved money in 2016—without changing their electricity use—had they participated in a "real-time pricing" program in which power prices change hourly."

> "Specifically, the paper finds real-time pricing would have trimmed bills for the average ComEd customer by $86.63 annually, or 13.2 percent less than they paid under the traditional flat-rate power pricing system. Moreover, real-time pricing would have generated savings for 97 percent of the households covered in the study, comprising total savings of $29.8 million."

If you identify yourself as an environmentalist and have become enamored with the idea of time-of-use billing, please don't be deluded into thinking that the Illinois report proves that smart meters will offer environmental benefits, because the report states that 97% of the customers WOULD NOT need to change their consumption patterns to "save money."

And please don't be fooled into believing that time-of-use billing plans implemented by investor-owned utilities will save you money, because even as demand for electricity has decreased, in the real world, rates have increased. Some jurisdictions have implemented fixed minimal charges, so that when consumers conserve, they have to pay for electricity they are not even using.

Details about the bill impact on 3% of the population are not provided, but does this statistic potentially make a case for targeting the 3% if the purpose of time-of-use billing is to shift demand to non-peak times? Unless those customers are unable to shift their consumption, for example, if they work 3rd shift and are not even home during the reduced rate time periods? Other customers may not be able to "shed load" if they need power for medical devices. What percentage of the 97% of customers selected to be surveyed were simply not home during the peak pricing periods?

Had ratepayers not been surcharged for the installation of wireless utility meters in the CUB-EDF report, would ratepayers have saved MORE than the $83.63 annually?

And, what are the undisclosed costs for future maintenance, repair, and security of the wirelessly controlled grid? We can ask PPL customers about meter replacement cost.

> "The Allentown-based utility touted itself as a pioneer when it installed 1.3 million meters from 2002 through 2004. But those devices proved obsolete in just four years, failing to meet the minimum performance requirements of new state regulations."

The reported total savings of $29.8 million in Illinois is determined SOLELY by the price differential between flat rates and time-varying rates, which is subject to change. Industry research has indicated if the price differential is not punitive enough, results are diminished, fueling the entitlement by utilities and regulators for even higher surcharges.

And, pricing is subject to change after meter installation. If you want to learn more about how that works, research what happened to solar producers who accepted a wireless smart meter so that they could sell their electricity back to the grid. After meter installation, compensation formulas were altered in favor of utilities, Look also into caps on solar, the favoring of utility –scale solar over rooftop, and surcharges for solar producers to access the grid to understand the bigger picture.

But here is where the rubber really meets the road.

Does data lie? And, are human rights abuses acceptable? And, are we pursuing another wave of unsustainable economic growth under the guise of sustainability with an unsafe product?

Does data lie?

While the Illinois report recommends that other states adopt legislation to share anonymous energy-use data with researchers, the Illinois paper points to the dangers of outcome-oriented data interpretation by special interests.

In another example; Navigant reported that in Massachusetts, National Grid's $45M 15,000-meter pilot program achieved a remarkable 98% retention rate. But the problem is that the pilot numbers dropped to 11,000 while the cost rose to $60M, making the math highly suspect and misleading, if not fraudulent. This scenario was compounded by the auto-enrollment program design that overran the process of community consent.

As citizens are being sold on the benefits of smart cities and big data in order to drive their acceptance of zoning overrides for 5G installations and loss of privacy protections, Navigant's reporting and the EDF/CUB report point to the danger of decision-based evidence making.

Are human rights abuses acceptable?

Informed environmentalists are recognizing that wireless smart utility meters have been deployed in a predatory model, without full disclosure, and fraught with unexamined risks and harm to human health and the environment.

The federal deployment myth began with the Illinois mantra that we could "modernize the

grid for less than $3/month" with the promise that the "smart meters would help to integrate renewables into the grid" and "give consumers more control over their energy consumption." When it became clear that the utilities were not actually in the business of integrating renewables, and that cost savings were not being passed on to consumers, the other side of the carrot and stick technique emerged.

Whether it was the threat of a neighborhood gas pipeline or power plant or a nuclear reactor, communities across the country were held under siege by the threat of additional fossil fuel infrastructure, loss of property values, and health damages. Then, the Hail Mary Pass of smart meters was presenting as a saving grace, with the glitter of "technological advancement" and "modernization" and "robust architecture' and "efficiency" and "cost savings."

The problem is that we never bothered to investigate whether or not the microwave radio frequency exposures and high voltage transients that we are adding to the grid in the name of efficiency are safe for humans or the environment, and indications are that they are not.

The justification that smart meters will address the health and environmental costs of the fossil fuel model has never been tested, and may be akin to claiming that Takata airbags will still reduce collision costs, ignoring the reality that they have in fact killed people.

As individuals around the country report the acute onset of heart arrhythmias, electromagnetic hypersensitivity, sleep disorders, and neurological symptoms associated with utility infrastructure, we have a sordid cast of tobacco scientists, psychologists with no medical training, captured regulatory agencies, and industry spokespersons doing what's been done to women in particular for decades, – portraying a serious health condition as an imaginary psychological ailment, with resulting ridicule and dismissal.

At the same time, we have increasing rates of many illnesses and chronic health conditions that may be caused by the increasing assault of electro-smog on our biology. Alzheimer's, ADHD, autism, and cancer are suspect. Lack of protections, and lack of appropriate diagnosis and treatment, while pursuing costly drug cures instead of addressing root causes has been the result.

What we could do instead, tomorrow, is monitor the radio frequency exposure and the power quality of the electricity flowing on the grid, and see if it correlates with measurable biological adverse impacts in residents reporting harm. It's not an insurmountable scientific or medical challenge; it is an abject failure of political will.

A bullying model prevails in most smart-metered jurisdictions, with medically vulnerable ratepayers having no right of refusal, or incurring a punitive surcharge. Worse yet, replacement meters do not address the issue of polluted power quality introduced by the meter's electronics. An un-quantified portion of residents have been threatened with loss of access to water, gas or electricity for refusal to accept a wireless meter, and some have already had their services terminated.

If you feel that the installation of smart meters will not cause hardship to certain classes of customers, calculate what the electricity rates will be under either plan (fixed or variable) for a home health aide who visits twice a week in the afternoon to vacuum, do the laundry, and run the dishwasher; or the stay at home parent with a disabled child, after they are also surcharged for grid modernization that penalizes them for their lifestyle requirements.

Are we pursuing another wave of unsustainable economic growth under the guise of sustainability?

We have no evidence that the introduction of wireless utility meters has not caused harm to human health, because we never bothered to test the meters for health effects. What we have is an increase in chronic illness and disease, and reports of profound suffering in the EHS population due to lack of safety in their own homes.

We have no evidence that wireless smart meters did not contribute to the destruction of the recent northeast Halloween week storms, because we never bothered to determine if the wireless emissions and high voltage transients have weakened the trees themselves, making them more vulnerable to winds, pests, and viruses, even though we know that foliage interferes with wireless signaling.

And the lawsuit charging that flammable smart meters expanded the recent CA wine country fires mirrors earlier concerns raised in California that the flammable electronic meters ignite outside the home beyond detection from interior smoke detectors, already resulting in at least two deaths.

We have no evidence that wireless utility meters do not have adverse impacts on the environment, including pollinators.

So why have non-profit groups like the Sierra Club, Environmental Defense Fund, and National Resources Defense Council colluded with utilities to help spin the smart meter story? Follow the money.

As informed opposition to smart meters due to green-washing, cost, security, privacy, cost, hack-ability, fire, EMP vulnerability, and health concerns continues to be ignored, the industry itself is optimistic about the future, stating to investors that if customers demand safer technology, it will increase the meter replacement cycle, leading to increased profits and an accelerated return on investment.

As uninformed environmentalists continue to advocate for smart meters, the stark truth is that despite the installation of wireless water meters across the country, there is still lead in the water in Detroit.

Despite claims that smart meters will save energy, the always-on carbon footprint of the wireless economy wastes energy and/or electricity. If vast numbers of consumers were to implement a practice of turning the Wi-Fi on only when it is being used, we would not have empty libraries, schools, homes, and businesses wasting energy, and we would decrease our carbon footprint. We could engineer a water alarm system that only transmits a notification to the homeowner, and only when a leak is detected, instead of 24/7/365.

The problem is that the rollout of smart meters is actually designed to perpetuate the pattern of unconscious consumption that fuels the industries involved, and the system is actually designed for wide-scale data collection and not conservation of resources. The data prostitutes the ratepayer, whose private profile is continuously harvested and sold. The problem is that as Homeland Security has turned its surveillance efforts in on its own citizens, the grid has been transformed into a surveillance system, yielding vast potentials for both blackmail and bribery. The smart meter myth is a cultivated greed that is taking us on a road to nowhere, while leaving a portion of residents with no place to live.

And here's one other overlooked factor– citizens who desire to manifest a responsible conservation lifestyle do not need punitive pricing structures because they are highly motivated and compliant. The tragedy unfolds when they are purposefully manipulated and misled.

In the season of giving, please consider giving feedback to the EDF, NRDC, and Sierra Club that you'll be donating elsewhere.

For this precious planet, we do better.

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